

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Preston House
City of Salem, VA

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Federal Style _____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

roof metal

walls wood

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.
-

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

_____ Architecture _____

Period of Significance c. 1821-1955

Significant Dates c. 1821

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

_____ n/a _____

Cultural Affiliation _____ n/a _____

Architect/Builder _____ unknown _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

___ previously listed in the National Register

___ previously determined eligible by the National Register

___ designated a National Historic Landmark

___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

___ Other State agency

___ Federal agency

___ Local government

___ University

___ Other

Name of repository: VA Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.96 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 17 580587 4127157 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Michael J. Pulice, Architectural Historian

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date January 15, 2005

street & number: 1030 Penmar Ave SE telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Dr. Esther Clark Brown

street & number 1936 West Main St. telephone 540-387-0707

city or town Salem state VA zip code 24153

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Summary Description

The Preston House is a two-story brick house, five bays wide and one-room deep, that appears to date to c.1821. The house possesses many hallmarks of the Federal style including Flemish bond brickwork, gauged jack arches over windows and doors, and fine interior woodwork. At the same time, the house is highly characteristic of its place in the western Valley of Virginia, with its single-pile, central passage plan and original rear ell, its exterior end chimneys and decorative brick cornices.

Site Description

The Preston House and grounds are located on the south (east) side of U.S. Highway 11/460 (Salem's West Main Street), at the west end of the City of Salem. The highway corridor follows the historic Wilderness Road through the southwestern Valley of Virginia and into Tennessee, and has to this day remained the area's busiest transportation route since prehistoric times. The house is set back from West Main Street, near the middle of a narrow, elongated lot, oriented perpendicular to the road. The owner of the Preston House owns both adjacent (vacant) lots to the east and west, which serve as buffers between the historic home and encroaching commercial development along Main Street. Railroad tracks define the parcel boundary to the south. There are no surviving historic structures associated with the Preston House, but the potential for intact archaeological deposits on the property has not been investigated. Lost secondary resources include a brick kitchen and log smokehouse that stood near the house in the rear yard, as well as a very large corn crib that stood southwest of the house, now on the adjacent parcel.

House Description

The Preston House is essentially an I-house with a 2-story rear ell (originally a smaller, 1½-story ell, enlarged in 1946). The house has a fieldstone foundation, Flemish bond brick walls on all sides, 5-bay facade, brick end chimneys on sides and rear, and medium pitch side-gable roof. Many of the header bricks are glazed or heat-discolored to a gray-white color and a smaller percentage of stretchers are partially glazed. [Glazed brick on primary elevations are actually quite rare among surviving buildings in the area, especially after ca. 1830.] The brick joinery in general is fine, with narrow, penciled, beaded joints. Although not exceptionally well formed, the bricks have proven durable. The mortar appears to be original and is in extraordinarily good condition throughout the structure. Just below the eave on the front and rear elevation is a decorative brick cornice consisting of three corbelled courses of bricks, with the middle course angled to form a mouse-tooth pattern.

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All three courses are now painted white. On the rear elevation the cornice is slightly different, with only the bottom

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corbelled course angled in moose-tooth fashion.

Over the main entrance is a one-story pedimented portico constructed in the late 20th century. [A 1978 photograph shows a different 1-bay, 1-story front porch, and a 1946 photograph shows a Victorian-era 3-bay front porch.] The front door, with its diminutive brass knob, features five panels in a configuration of two wide, vertical rectangles in the top half, a narrow horizontal panel just below the knob, and two square panels at the bottom. Above the door is a 4-pane transom light. The window sash are all pre-1947 single-pane replacements, but all windows retain their original wood surrounds and shutter hardware. The first floor windows have gauged brick jack arches. The shorter 2nd floor windows are overlaid by a course of sailor bricks. There are segmental-arched window openings at the basement level, one on each side of the front porch.

In 1950, the one-room, 1 ½-story rear ell was enlarged to a two-room, two-story wing. With the exception of the roof, all of the existing original fabric was retained, including chimney, upstairs hearth, and flooring. By this time, the window sash throughout the house had already been replaced. Photographs of the house before these changes occurred, including several from 1946, are now in DHR archives.

Interior

The interior plan consists of a wide central hall flanked by single rooms on both the first and second floors, and a kitchen area in the rear ell, accessed through a doorway in west room. The west room herein referred to as the “hall,” is the largest room of the house (besides the same-sized bedroom above it). The hall features less formal woodwork than the parlor across the hall, but nonetheless has a fine mantel and paneled wainscoting. The parlor features wainscoting of tall, vertical, recessed panels and discontinuous fluted bands on the chair rail. The uniquely styled parlor mantel is 5 feet tall and has two recessed panels separated by reeded pilasters, and a continuous reeded band just below the mantel shelf. The firebox is lined with handmade brick, and has not been altered from its original form. Off of the rear elevation of the main wing and the east elevation of the ell is a former porch that is now enclosed. Ceiling height in the first floor rooms is 9 feet, 1 inch.

Access to the second floor or the main wing is gained by way of a relatively narrow winder stair in the back, right corner of the central hall. The stair rail and balusters are square and plain. Beneath the stair is a small, original closet with a strap-hinged door. Access to the second floor of the rear ell

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is gained via a boxed-in corner stair in the kitchen. These stairs are enclosed by a door with original hardware including hand-forged strap hinges. The original cooking fireplace, mantel and chimney of **Section 7, 8** **Page 3**

the rear ell were preserved when the ell was enlarged. The mantel is as impressive as any other in the house.

Beneath the original structure is a fully excavated, stone-lined basement in which hewn oak beams can be seen. The basement is accessed via a bulkhead entrance on the east side of the house. In the unfinished attic are heavy sash-sawn oak rafters, each matching pair mortised and pegged together and inscribed with the customary Roman numerals.

Dating the Building

The exact construction date of the house has not been precisely determined, although little evidence has been found to suggest that it dates to the eighteenth century or even to the period of Cole's ownership of the property (prior to 1821). This assertion is based primarily on the presence of power-sawn timbers and floorboards throughout the house and the absence of hand-forged nails of any kind. Although new information may some day come to light, these two clues alone suggest construction sometime after 1810, and more likely after 1815. Brick dwellings, especially those of the large, two-story variety, were rare in western Virginia, and exceedingly rare southwest of Fincastle, before ca. 1820. In fact, corbelled brick cornices were rare throughout western Virginia until around the 1820s. Moreover, the chimneys all have stepped shoulders rather than sloped weatherings, which is also indicative of a nineteenth-century date. The interior woodwork suggests late Federal, rather than early Federal period. Supporting evidence is provided in a paper by researcher Leah Spadaro, who found that there was no change in tax assessment for the parcel from 1788 to 1821, but a value added of \$2200 on account of buildings, beginning in 1822. This figure did not substantially increase until well into the twentieth century. When all the available evidence is considered, it appears likely that construction of the house was begun in 1821 and completed the following year.

Integrity Statement

The Preston House has lost much of its physical context, including all secondary structures once associated with the house, as well as the rural quality of its surrounding landscape. Yet it remains, occupied and in good condition, buffered by vacant lots on each side, a small island representing the distant past. The house maintains a vast proportion of historic fabric, including its random width pine floorboards in each room, its plastered walls, paneled wainscoting and elegant carved mantels.

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The original multiple-light window sash were replaced prior to 1947 with the existing single-pane sash, but each of the original wood surrounds remain intact. The exterior roofing material is now asphalt, but in the unfinished attic one can still view the exposed timber rafters and original roof sheathing.

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8. Statement of Significance

Summary and Justification

The Preston House in Salem is an early I-form, Federal-style mansion built during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It may be the earliest known surviving brick building in Roanoke

County and is among the earliest brick buildings south or west of Fincastle (Botetourt County) in Virginia. The house possesses many hallmarks of the Federal-period high style including Flemish

bond brickwork, gauged brick jack arches over wall openings, and fine interior woodwork; yet its single-pile, central passage plan and original rear ell, exterior end chimneys and decorative brick cornices also make it highly characteristic of western Valley of Virginia domestic architecture. The property is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Its period of significance is ca.1821 through 1955.

Acknowledgements

Valuable assistance with this nomination was provided by Michael F. Kennedy and by John Long of the Salem Historical Society and Museum.

Historical Background

Tradition has it that the Preston House was built for John Cole, prior to 1790. Cole was a blacksmith who bought and occupied 278 acres on the Roanoke River from John Love in 1788. Davy Crocket recalled in his autobiography that he lodged "at the house of a Mr. John Cole on Roanoke" at the age of 12. Cole acquired additional acreage between 1815 and 1820, but finally sold his 735 acres to John Johnson (or Johnston), before moving to Missouri in 1821. Architectural and archival evidence, however, does not support an 18th-century date of construction for the house. It appears instead that it was probably built for (or perhaps *by*) Johnson, shortly after Cole sold the acreage in 1821 for \$10,000. In 1836, ownership was transferred to William Johns(t)on who held it until his death in 1853. Three years later, his wife, Lucy, became the legal owner of the house and its immediate grounds, while the land was portioned off to their children. In August, 1879, Lucy Johnston's land and home were sold to Charles I. Preston for a paltry sum of \$600. Preston died in 1894, but his

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widow, Mary Persinger Preston retained ownership until her own death in 1924, when it was again parceled out to the Preston children. According to the current owner, a Claude Preston and Matilda Preston, both children of Charles and Mary, lived in the house until 1946. Claude passed away and left the house to a sister, Mary Preston Clark, who in-turn bequeathed it to her daughter Esther Clark Brown, the present owner/occupant, in 1974. [Spadaro, Leah, "Preston Place," Hollins College, 1987, 4-8].

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9. Bibliography

Brown, Dr. Esther Clark. Personal Communication. July 2004.

Cole, Winfred Bryan. *History of the Bryan-Cole Family in America*. Arnold, Missouri, published by the author, 1962, 18-19, 90-93.

Spadaro, Leah. "Preston Place." Unpublished paper. Hollins College, May, 1987.

Annotated photographs provided by Dr. Esther C. Brown. Copies in DHR archives.

10. Geographical Data

Boundary Description

The boundary of the 2.96-acre nominated parcel conforms to that of City of Salem tax parcel 138-2-7.

Boundary Justification

The 2.96-acre nominated parcel is part of the Preston family ancestral land holdings, and includes the only remaining structure from the property's period of significance.

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All photographs are of: Preston House
City of Salem, Virginia

Photographers: Michael F. Kennedy and Michael J. Pulice Date: July, 2004
Negative #21633, 21634

Location of negatives: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

1. VIEW OF: House, north & west elevations
2. VIEW OF: House, rear elevation
3. VIEW OF: House, central hall staircase
4. VIEW OF: House, central hall staircase, alternate angle
5. VIEW OF: House, parlor mantel
6. VIEW OF: House, parlor wainscoting
7. VIEW OF: House, hall mantel
8. VIEW OF: House, hall wainscoting
9. VIEW OF: House, bedroom mantel, second floor
10. VIEW OF: House, attic
11. VIEW OF: House, attic rafters